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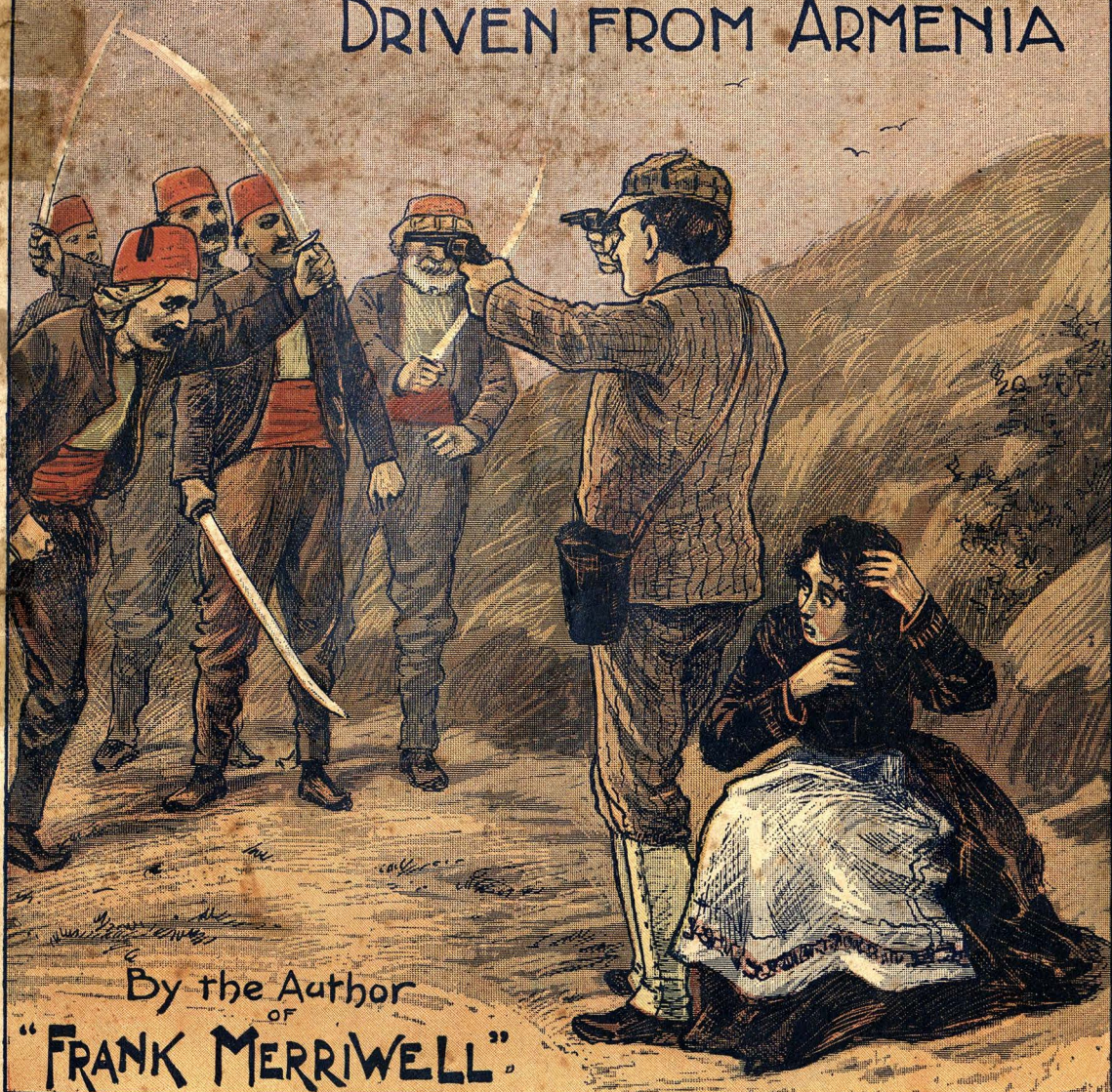
Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

November 28, 1896.

Vol. I. No. 33.

Price Five Cents.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S VENTURE OR DRIVEN FROM ARMENIA



By the Author
OF
"FRANK MERRIWELL"

"STAND BACK!" CRIED FRANK, COMMANDINGLY. "NOT ONE OF YOU SHALL LAY A HAND ON HER!"

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CHAPTER I.

FRANK IS AROUSED.

"It is a blot on civilization and the nineteenth century!" exclaimed Frank Merriwell, who had been reading a little paper-covered book.

"Eh? What's that?" asked Professor Scotch, looking up from a copy of the *London Times*, which he was perusing.

"I say these Armenian outrages are a blot and disgrace to our boasted civilization. Why England does not intervene and save the wretched Armenians is more than I can understand."

"Now you are getting excited, Frank. This question is something you do not understand. Lord Salisbury in his speech here reported explains why England does not interfere."

"Oh, he does, does he? Well, what does he say?"

"He says Great Britain is under no obligation to declare war against the Sultan of Turkey simply because there is a rebellion and a race war going on in that country."

Frank leaped to his feet.

"A rebellion and a race war!" he cried, scornfully. "What rubbish that is! What a contemptible crawl in order to get out

of responsibility in the matter! How can there be a rebellion and a race war when the Armenians are not armed, but are being plundered and murdered and outraged in every conceivable manner! Rubbish, I say!"

"Sh! Easy, Frank—easy! Remember that you are in England—in London—and may be overheard."

"What do I care if I am! Not all Englishmen are backing Lord Salisbury. In fact, I doubt if the majority of them agree with him. They know he is wrong."

"You are getting beyond your depth, young man," said Scotch, severely. "England knows her business."

"And England will be forced and shamed into crushing the detestable Sultan she is now supporting on his tottering throne," came warmly from the boy's lips. "England is responsible for this bloodshed in Armenia, for Hamid II. would be powerless in Turkey to-day if it had not been for England."

"You are as hot-headed as ever. When you get stirred up over anything, there does not seem to be any reasoning with you."

"Reasoning, professor—why, I feel certain I am right. Listen to these words

from one of England's great poets. Hear what he has to say of Armenia, her dead, and of England."

Then Frank read from the little book in his hand:

"Heaped in their ghastly graves they lie,
the breeze
Sickenings o'er fields where others vainly
wait
For burial; and the butchers keep high
state
In silken palaces of perfumed ease.
The panther in the desert, matched with
these,
Is pitiful; beside their lust and hate,
Fire and plague-wind are compassionate,
And soft the deadliest fangs of ravening
seas.
How long shall they be borne? Is not the
cup
Of crime yet full? Doth devildom still
lack
Some consummating crown, that we hold
back
The scourge, and in Christ's borders give
them room?
How long shall they be borne, O Eng-
land? Up,
Tempest of God, and sweep them to their
doom!"

"That's good rhythm and rhyme," commented the professor, coolly, "but the poet was excited when he wrote it. It is plain he did not regard the matter in a cool and calculating way."

"Cool and calculating! Great Scott! How can anybody regard it in a cool and calculating way? Murder and all nameless outrages are not things for anybody with the heart of a human being in his body to be cool and calculating over."

"In many ways, without doubt, the Armenians themselves are to blame for what has taken place."

"Professor, I am ashamed to hear you make such a statement! You are a scholar, and you have read, studied, and traveled. Even if the Armenians have been unruly, which I do not admit, does that excuse the Sultan in having them

murdered and made homeless and left to starve? Do you think a few unruly subjects would be treated thus in the United States?"

"Those final words, my boy, show you are not well posted in this matter. The Armenians are not a few subjects in Turkey. They number hundreds upon hundreds of thousands."

"That is admitted, but what I do not admit is that more than a few of them could have been unruly in any way, and yet the Turks have murdered hundreds of thousands, and left over five hundred thousand homeless and destitute."

"Oh, well, it is no use to talk to you. You have been reading those pernicious newspaper stories and the verses of an excitable poet, and you think you know it all. Lord Salisbury acknowledges that he believed the Sultan's government impotent, but he says there is no ground for believing the Sultan instigated the massacres."

"How does he know? The Sultan is a Mohammedan, and all true followers of the Prophet hate Christians with a fierce and unrelenting hatred. It is a part of their religion. They are taught to hate all who do not believe the same as themselves, and they believe if they kill a Christian dog it assures them a place in Paradise."

"Oh, that is what the Armenians say."

"It may be what the Armenians say, but there is no doubt of its absolute truth. The priests go to the mosques and preach to the Turkish worshipers that they must love their fellow-believers, but hate and kill all others, who are Giaours, heathen dogs, filthy hogs. By the Sultan's orders, they are carrying out the precepts of their religion in Armenia."

"Tut, tut! You forget what General Lew Wallace, who is not an Englishman, but an American, said of the Sultan. He asserted that the so-called atrocities were exaggerated, and declares the Sultan a

good man, who is incapable of such things."

"Which goes to show how General Wallace was hoodwinked by the Sultan, who is full of craft and guile. What did he see of Armenia? Did he go to the country where the massacres were taking place and are still taking place? No. He was invited to the Sultan's palace by the crafty old villain, he was feasted and flattered, and Mrs. Wallace was decorated with jewels. The Sultan wore the mask, and the general was fooled, that is all."

"Well, well, well! You seem to be ready enough with an argument, but it is plain you do not know what you are talking about."

"That is no argument at all, professor. It is the same as acknowledging that you have the worst end of it."

"Nonsense! What is the use of wasting breath and energy in arguing with you? It will make no difference. You must remember the American minister has said the reports of the situation in Armenia are distorted and exaggerated."

"And the American minister was hoodwinked exactly as was General Wallace. The Sultan is playing the game for all it is worth. He means to wipe the Armenians off the face of the earth, and then he will say there is no trouble in that country, as he has succeeded in restoring order."

"You seem to think everybody easily fooled who does not believe as you do on this point."

"Men who will not believe absolute proof must desire to be fooled."

"But I deny that absolute proof has been given out. I have no doubt but if we were to go to Armenia we would find things entirely different from what they have been represented to be by the sensational newspapers."

Frank struck his clinched right hand into the open palm of his left.

"That gives me an idea, professor."

"What is it?"

"Let's go to Armenia and find out about these things for our own satisfaction."

Scotch flung up both hands in horror.

"Are you crazy?" he cried. "Such a scheme is impossible!"

"Why impossible?" asked Frank, with strange calmness.

"We would have to secure passports, and they would not be given us. We would not be allowed to enter Armenia."

"And why? Simply because the Turks would be afraid to have us know the truth. That is proof that what I have said is right. But I believe we can get into Armenia for all of the Turks."

"How?"

"By not attempting to pass through Constantinople. Travelers visit Jerusalem and the Holy Land every year by thousands, and so enter Turkey. I believe the country may be entered three hundred and fifty miles north of Jerusalem, at Mersina, from which place there is a railroad to Adana."

"Even then one would not be in Armenia."

"By traveling two hundred miles overland the vicinity of the atrocities could be reached."

"It is a wild and impossible scheme."

"Why so?"

"The roads are said to be wretched and difficult everywhere."

"What of that? We would not travel in carriages, but on horseback. I believe it can be done."

"The Turks would not allow it. We would be turned back a score of times."

"Possibly so, if we allowed ourselves to be turned back. Armenians are not allowed to leave the country unless they deposit a sum of money sufficient to pay the tax imposed upon them as long as they shall live, but still they find a way to escape by thousands. All my scheme requires is nerve and determination. Come, professor, are you in it?"

"Never!. This is like other wild schemes. But I will not countenance it. We will visit Italy next, but we will not go near Armenia."

"Which shows that you yourself do not believe the Turks wish the truth known about the situation in that wretched country. You are not consistent, professor."

"Have it as you like. If I am not consistent, I have a little sense. Give up thinking of such a wild scheme, Frank."

"I shall not give it up, professor; but I cannot force you to go there if you refuse to go. I am going out for a walk, to see if I cannot cool off a little. This discussion has stirred my blood."

Frank took his hat and left the room.

"Confound that boy!" muttered the professor. "He isn't afraid of anything. He would wade through fire and blood if he took a fancy to do so. I'll have to get this notion of going to Armenia out of his head some way."

CHAPTER II.

SADUKH MARDEROS' STORY.

Frank went into town and strolled down Piccadilly. At Leicester Square he suddenly stopped and uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Can I believe my eyes?" he muttered, staring hard at another boy, who was staring back at him.

A moment later the two boys moved toward each other, and then they sprang forward with outstretched hands.

"Am I dreaming, or is it Barney Mulloy?" cried Frank.

"Be me soul, it's Frank Merriwell!" the other boy almost shouted.

They met and clasped hands, laughing out their pleasure and astonishment.

"An' is it yersilf?" cried the Irish lad, with a rich brogue. "Did yez dhrop from th' skoy, Frankie? or how does it happen ye're here at all, at all?"

"Wonders never cease, old man," declared Frank. "I am sure I did not dream of meeting you in London. I supposed you back at the military school in Fardale."

"It's him—it's Frankie!" burst from the other boy, as if he had been in doubt up to that moment. "Come here, ye rascal—come to these arms, ye ould darlint!"

And then, for all of the wondering amusement of the pedestrians on every hand, Barney Mulloy, one of Frank's most devoted friends at Fardale, clasped Merriwell in his arms and gave him a genuine "bear hug."

"It's a soight fer sore oies ye are!" cried Barney, joyfully. "It's mesilf as were thinkin' av yez not tin minutes ago, an' wishin' ye wur here. Drame av angels, an' ye'll hear th' rustle av their wings."

"But how in the world does it happen that you are here—in London?"

"Oi have been visitin' me relatives in th' Ould Dart, an' Oi came to London to see me sister, Mrs. Marderos."

"Marderos? That is an odd name."

"So it is, fer it's a furriner Biddy married—wan av thim Armenian gentlemin."

"What's that?" cried Frank, in astonishment. "Married an Armenian?"

"Thot's pwhat she did, me b'y. Av course Oi'd rayther she'd married a son av th' Ould Sod, ur even a Yankee, but she didn't ax me, an' love will go pwhere it's sint, ye know. It don't same thot she's done so bad, for Sadukh Marderos is a clane broth av a b'y, an' a good Catholic he has become."

"Well, this is interesting," said Frank.

"I hope your sister has done well."

"She shtands a foine chance av bein' a widdy before long"

"How is that?"

"It's a touchin' letther Sadukh recaved from his own sister last wake, an' now he is fer goin' back to Armenia an' bringin' her away wid him."

"What's that you tell me?" cried Merriwell, giving the Irish lad a shake. "Going back to Armenia?"

"Don't be afther shakin' th' tathe out av me head, lad! Yis, he is goin' back fer his sister to bring her here to London."

"By Jove, this is luck! Barney, I want you to take me to Sadukh Marderos immediately."

"I'll do thot; but pwhat is th' matter wid yez, me b'y? Ye same plazed about something."

"Pleased! I am delighted! I want to have a talk with your sister's husband. Barney, I am thinking of going to Armenia myself."

The Irish boy fell back a step, staring at Frank in astonishment.

"Is it crazy ye are?" he gasped.

"I think not. I want to know about this Armenian affair. This very day I have been talking with Professor Scotch about it, and he insists that the atrocities have not been so bad as reported by the newspapers."

"An' is thot pwhat he says? Thot shows he don't know pwhat he is talkin' about, for they have been so bad th' newspapers have not been able to print the truth in language dacent people could rade. Wait till yez hear Sadukh tell about thim. Th' blood av yez will run cold wid horror. It wur by a miracle he escaped wid his loife at all, at all. Th' Grand Mogul av Turkey, th' bloody ould Sultan, put a poice on his head. Aven now he is not safe, for an inimy av his, Hassan Isnick, folleyed him here, an' th' soame rascal is somewhere in London, havin' twice troied to kill Sadukh, but made a bad job av it both toimes, bad cess to th' loikes av th' bloody spalpane!"

Frank was greatly interested. For some time he had desired to meet and talk with a fugitive from Armenia, and he had found the opportunity at last. He directed

Barney to take him to Sadukh Marderos without delay.

Soon the boys were seated on an omnibus and bound for the East End.

Frank questioned Barney about matters at Fardale, and they chatted on as boy friends will who have been separated for some time.

Finally they left the omnibus and made their way on foot into a thickly settled quarter of the East End.

At length they came to a little coffee house, into which Barney led the way.

Frank was surprised to find everything neat and clean about the place, for all that the house was located in a decidedly dirty quarter of London.

Barney was greeted by a rather buxom young Irish woman, and he then introduced Frank.

"Whist, Biddy! pwhat do yez think?"

"Oi dunno, Barney. Pwhat is it?"

"Have ye oies in yer head?"

"Sure an' Oi have, you t'asin' rascal."

"Thin jist take a look at this young gentleman Oi have wid me."

"As if Oi could kape me oies off a handsome young gentleman loike him!" cried Biddy, in a way that brought the color to Frank's cheeks.

"An' can yez guess who he is?"

"How can Oi do the loikes av thot?"

"Will yez give it up?"

"Sure an' Oi will. He may be a duke or a lord for all Oi know."

"Ee's av more importance than all th' dukes an' lords in England, darlint."

"An' do yez tell me so! It's his name Oi'm wantin' to hear."

"Well, thin, Biddy, this is Frank Merriwell, pwhat Oi have writ yez about so many toimes."

"Saint Patherick save us!" cried Biddy, with uplifted hands. "An' Oi nivver dramed Oi'd see th' loikes av him in all me loife. It's deloighted Oi am to see yez, Misther Merriwell. It's cords an' tons av letthers Barney has writ me about yez."

It's great friends he said ye wur at Far-dale."

Frank shook hands with Biddy, who seemed tempted to embrace him. After they had chatted a while, Barney asked for Sadukh, and Biddy said he was taking a nap in the back room.

"It's seldom a bit av slape does he git th' whole noight long, poor man!" she declared. "It's twice thot bloody spal-pane Hassan Isnick has troied to murder him in th' noight, an' he don't dare slape now. Av Oi could get near th' imp av Satan, Oi'd do me best to scald him, so Oi would!"

As she was speaking, a young man appeared at a door that led into the back room. He was a strong, well-built young fellow, rather good looking, with an honest face.

"Here he is," said Barney, and then Frank was introduced to the Armenian fugitive.

When Sadukh knew Frank was one of Barney's particular friends and wished to learn something of Armenia, he invited Merriwell into the back room, which was also a living room.

Frank was not a little surprised to find the Armenian spoke English with scarcely any foreign accent.

"It's more than a year now since I escaped from Armenia and Mousa Beg," said Sadukh. "Mousa Beg is a Kurd chief, and a perfect devil. He has murdered hundreds upon hundreds of Christians, and carried their wives and daughters into captivity.

"We had heard much of the massacres, but it was not thought we would be troubled at Samsat, where I lived with my father and sister. My father was a merchant, and we were rich. I had two brothers at Sassoun, another at Dalvorig, and a married sister in Aliantz. Both of my brothers at Sassoun were killed in the horrible massacre that took place there. One of them was married, and his wife,

being very beautiful, was carried off to become a captive in a Turkish harem. He had two children, a boy and a girl. Both were butchered like lambs.

"We did not know the truth about the massacre for a long time after it took place. We heard all kinds of stories, but even we in Armenia could not believe things were as bad as represented.

"Then my brother in Dalvorig wrote me, and he said there was no doubt but our brothers at Sassoun were both dead, and that he was a fugitive, having escaped by a miracle from the terrible butchery that took place there.

"He had seen the people killed in the most horrible ways by the Kurds and the Turkish soldiers, and his blood was boiling with fury. But what could he do? He swore to be avenged. He would kill ten Turks for each of our brothers who had been slain.

"That was worse than folly. A short time after he wrote that letter he, too, was murdered. This we did not know for some time, but we knew it at last.

"Then came another horrible blow. My sister in Aliantz sent me word that her husband had been tortured to death, and she had been treated in the most inhuman and brutal manner.

"Can you know what I felt then?" cried Sadukh, his eyes blazing and his whole aspect being one of terrible fury. "I was nearly mad with the terrible wrong of it all. I was for hurrying to my sister, but I was not allowed to leave Samsat. In Armenia we are forced to procure passports to travel from one place to another, and the country was in such a condition that no passports could be secured.

"And then I looked at my sister Lucine. She was sixteen, and, in my eyes, the most beautiful girl in Armenia. I was not the only one who thought so, for the fame of her beauty had gone far from Samsat.

"Mousa Beg heard of her. He sent to Midhad Isnick, a Turk, who lived in our town, and told him to take Lucine by force and send her to him. Midhad Isnick tried to do so, but I ran a knife through his heart, and saved my beautiful sister.

"But I was marked for torture and death, and Mousa Beg swore that Lucine should be his. In the night I fled from Samsat, and I hid in a cave, where Lucine brought me food at fearful risk to herself. Then came Hassan Isnick, the brother of the man I had killed, and aroused the Turks to murder all the Armenians in Samsat.

"My father was warned in time, and he succeeded in escaping with Lucine from the town. Hassan Isnick searched everywhere for them and for me. He did not find us, but we nearly starved there in the cave.

"When we dared, we started out to try to reach the coast, more than one hundred and fifty miles away. I will not try to tell you the horrors of that tramp. We were hunted like beasts, barefooted, half-starved, nearly naked, weak, disheartened, willing to die.

"Mousa Beg pursued us, and Hassan Isnick was with him. They tracked us like bloodhounds, and they had two hundred bloodthirsty Kurds with them.

"At last, when Lucine could go no farther, being worn to a shadow of her former self, we found shelter beneath the roof of a good priest. None of us were Catholics, but, when he had heard our pitiful tale, he fed us and cared for us.

"Then Father O'Hara told me that he would try to hide us and shield my father and my sister, but he thought that I had better go on and try to escape from the country. My father and sister might be able to join me later.

"I did not want to leave them in the jaws of the wolf, but Father O'Hara argued with me, and he convinced me that it was best. I did as he wished. I

embraced my poor old father, once a rich man, but then a beggar. I kissed my beautiful sister, and left her to the care of God and Father O'Hara.

"I will not make the story too long. It is enough to say that Hassan Isnick seemed to strike my trail again as a bloodhound finds the scent. He pursued me to the coast, but I escaped him, and got out of Armenia with my life.

"I did not think it possible I should ever see Hassan Isnick again, unless I returned to Armenia; but even the Mediterranean did not seem to break the trail. He was thirsting for my blood, and, in some way, he traced me here to London. It took him many months to do so, and, in the meantime, I met and married Biddy, who had already started in this business.

"I have been trying to save money to return for my father and my sister. In this I have done very well, for it is said that Armenians have a way of making money anywhere. But Hassan Isnick came, and twice he has tried to kill me. Even now he may be— There he is!"

CHAPTER III.

AN APPEAL FROM ARMENIA.

As he uttered those last thrilling words, Sadukh Marderos whirled and pointed toward a little back window, at which the face of a man had appeared.

Frank Merriwell saw that face, and it was photographed on his memory in the fraction of a second. He believed he would never forget it.

Then the face disappeared.

"Bad cess to the spalpane!" cried Barney Mulloy, springing up and dashing out of the little shop by the back door.

Frank followed.

They reached the back yard, but saw nothing of the man who had looked in at the window. He had succeeded in escap-

ing by one of the two dirty alleys that led from the yard.

"Take that one, Barney, and I will take this," directed Frank.

"All roight, me hearty."

Into the alleys they darted.

Frank ran through till he came to a crooked street, but he saw nothing of the man he was after, and so he turned back.

As he reached the yard he fancied he heard a racket down the other alley, as if some kind of an encounter were taking place there.

He lost not a moment in rushing toward the point from which the sounds proceeded; but the noise stopped before he reached the spot.

As he came up, he saw Barney picking himself up from the ground, and the Irish boy was in a sadly battered and tattered condition. His coat was split up the back, he was covered with dirt, and there was a cut on one of his cheeks, as if he had been struck with iron knuckles.

"Great Jupiter!" cried Frank, in astonishment. "What have you been up against?"

"The divvil's own gang, Frankie," said the Irish lad, dolefully.

"Did you see the Turk?"

"Yes, but he saw me, and wint me thray ur four better."

"You have been in a fight?"

"Oh, no! Oi have been to a foive o'clock tay!"

"Did Hassan Isnick do the trick alone?"

"Nivver a bit av it, me b'y. He had his gang wid him."

"How many of them?"

"Four ur foive."

"And they jumped on you?"

"Oi should soay so! It wur a plot to do up Sadukh."

"How was that?"

"Th' bloodyould Turk thought Sadukh would folly him, an' he had th' gang waiting to do up Biddy's better half."

"Then they took you for your brother-in-law?"

"Thot's pwhat they did. And Oi'd not been in condition to tell yez about it now av ould Isnick hadn't sane the difference an' made them let me alone. Thin they heard you comin', an' they took to their hales. Oi wur knocked out, an' so Oi couldn't folly."

"Had you no weapons?"

"Ounly me fists."

"Then you have quit carrying a revolver since you ceased traveling around with me?"

"Yis."

"In knocking about over the world I have found a brace of revolvers handy things to have. If I had been with you —"

"It's nivver a thing we'd done to th' spalpanes! But Oi'll be aven wid ould Isnick, av Oi ivver meet th' divvil's broth again! Oi'll lay this ba'tin' up ag'in him, an' Oi may square th' account some doay."

The boys returned to the little coffee shop.

"I knew how it would be," said Sadukh. "I have followed him twice, but he escaped me both times. If I were to kill him in London, it is almost certain I would be arrested for murder, and yet he is determined to kill me. Wait! If he continues to follow me, we will meet in Armenia before long."

Biddy washed the blood from Barney's face, and then placed some sticking-plaster over the cut, drawing the edges together.

"There, ye scapegrace av a rascal!" she said. "Its not hurt at all, at all, ye are, soide av gittin' yer head cracked wid a shillaly at Donnybrook fair."

"An' Donnybrook fair is nivver a marker to a football game in th' United Shtates, Biddy," laughed Barney, as he caught her about the waist and gave her a kiss.

"So you really intend to return to Armenia, Mr. Marderos?" asked Frank.

"I must," he said. "Father O'Hara has protected my sister and my father all these many months. He kept them hidden, and Mousa Beg gave up trying to find them. Then they thought they were safe, and it must be that they became careless. I sent all my letters to them to Father O'Hara, and their letters to me were directed to a London gentleman who has been very kind to me. Here is the last letter I received from my sister. Let me read it to you."

He took the letter from his pocket, and unfolded it carefully. It was already well-worn, showing that he had read it over and over many times.

The letter ran as follows:

"MY DEAR BROTHER:—I fear we may never see each other again, and, oh! I have hoped so much that you might return for father and myself and take us far from this blood-stained land where Christians are not butchered like cattle. Your letters have been so eagerly longed for, and so eagerly read. We have been so glad to know that you have done well in London, and it is to your wife, whom you say is so brave and good, that we send our deepest love. I have hoped that some time we might come to London and see dear Biddy; but I fear now there is no hope of that, and it is almost certain this will be the last letter you will ever receive from your unhappy sister Lucine.

"Father O'Hara has been so good and kind to us. He is a good man. He has fed us and sheltered us, and for long it was not known by our enemies where we had hidden. They seemed to give up the search for us, and we had begun to think that they would trouble us no more.

"For all that we were not molested, father's health continued to fail, as he thought much of the great wrong that has been done our people, and how our family was so nearly destroyed by the bloodthirsty Kurds and Turks. And the tramp and exposure and hunger had weakened him so that he has never been himself since. You would not know him, he has changed

so much. He is bent and feeble, and his hair is white as the snow.

"My poor father! I have tried to care for him and cheer him. I have told him that some time you would come for us and take us to the country where you have gone; but he said that this was his own country, and he would die when he left it.

"And now Mousa Beg has heard that Father O'Hara has sheltered us. He is yet far away, but he has sent men to watch us till he shall come. They mean to kill my poor father, but they have no such mercy as that for me. But Mousa Beg shall never touch me with his vile hands. I have found a knife, which I have sharpened, and which I carry all the time in my bosom. I have prayed that my hand may be strong, and when there is no more hope of escape, that hand shall drive the blade to my heart. In that way I will escape them.

"Oh, my dear, good brother! how I would love to see you once again before I die! Father O'Hara bids me be of good cheer. He hopes to hide us in yet another place, and keep us a while longer from our enemies; but I think he will fail in this, as we are so closely watched.

"Farewell, my dear brother. Father sends his love. God pity the people of our wretched country! They are perishing by fire and sword, and their cries go up to Heaven! Can no one save us? Must we all perish and be wiped from the face of the earth? Farewell, farewell!

"Your affectionate sister,

"LUCINE."

To the end of this Father O'Hara had added a few lines.

"If you have money and can come to the aid of your father and sister, do not delay. I know not what day they may be taken from me. I shall do my best to shelter them yet a little longer, but there is no knowing when the blow may fall. If you cannot save your father, it is your duty to save your sister from the horrible fate that has befallen so many beautiful Armenian girls."

"There!" cried Sadukh, when he had read the letter; "what do you think of that?"

Frank had been fired by the letter.

"It is terrible!" he exclaimed. "And still there are those who claim the Armenians have suffered no wrong save what they have brought upon themselves."

"Such ones do not know, and it cannot be that they wish to know. They believe the lies of the Turks, and they would hold back the hands which are outstretched to save my suffering land."

"When do you start for Armenia, Mr. Marderos?"

"On the day after to-morrow. All is arranged."

"I shall go with you," declared Frank, suddenly. "I am determined to know the entire truth."

"Whist, b'y! are yez crazy?" cried Barney, excitedly. "Th' profissor will nivver allow it."

"I have money enough at my command, and the professor will not be able to stop me. Will you go along with us, Barney?"

"Will Oi? Soay, Frankie, do yez mane it?"

"Certainly. I will pay the bills, and you will be my traveling companion, the same as before."

"Frankie, me jool, Oi'm wid yez to th' ind, an' here's me hand on it. We'll soave Sadukh's sister, ur bu'st our suspinders troying."

The boys clasped hands.

CHAPTER IV.

TIDINGS FROM KALGORE.

Some weeks later a party of three persons were making their way along a wretched road that led between two Armenian villages.

These three persons were Sadukh Marderos, Frank Merriwell, and Barney Mulloy.

They were mounted on tough little Persian horses, sure-footed animals on the roughest roads, tough as knots and hard as iron.

Sadukh was the guide. Not that he knew that particular section of the country any better than did his companions, but he spoke the language of the Armenians or the Turks, and he was able to learn the proper course to be pursued by making inquiries.

Several times had the trio been stopped and warned to turn back. Twenty times had they been in danger of arrest because they had no passports.

They had eluded all who sought to detain them, and were still pushing forward toward the Euphrates and the little village in which good Father O'Hara had sheltered Sadukh's father and sister.

They had seen many fugitives who were hiding in the mountains, and flying from the destroying Turks. They had heard horrible tales of massacres and pillaging, and they had been warned a hundred times that they were going to certain death.

Still nothing could turn them back, nothing daunted them, nothing made them falter. They had come more than two thousand miles for the purpose of finding and rescuing an old, white-haired man and a beautiful, dark-eyed girl, and nothing but death itself could stop them.

At last, after much trouble, through a friendly Turk, they succeeded in obtaining passports under false names. Provided with these, they were not detained so often. By "putting up a stiff bluff" on all occasions when necessary, they were able to get along very well.

But as they advanced into the interior, they saw more wretched fugitives, and heard still more heart-rending stories of the outrages heaped upon the defenseless Armenians by their remorseless oppressors.

The indignation of the two boys had been aroused to the highest pitch, and still, as yet, they had seen nothing of the atrocities which were taking place all over that land.

Originally, the wily Turks had confined their work to the interior, far from the coast of the Mediterranean, so that the truth concerning the massacres should not too quickly be spread broadcast over the world.

But now that the burning and butchering had been carried on without interruption, now that it seemed certain that not one of the great powers of Europe dared lift a hand to interfere, the Sultan was becoming bolder, and the edict to "exterminate the Christians root and branch" had gone forth.

Those nearer the seacoast, who had at first fancied themselves secure, were beginning to realize that they, too, were marked for destruction.

"To-morrow," said Sadukh, "we will come to the village of Diargat, where a hundred Armenians, men, women, and children, were killed one week ago. The Turks say the Armenians there attempted an uprising, and they were forced to kill them in self-defense. Not a single Armenian who has not embraced the Mohammedan faith has been left alive within the limits of the village. The old man with whom I talked at the dividing of the roads told me this."

"It will not be exactly healthy for us to enter such a village, will it?" asked Frank.

"We shall not enter it. We will go round it, and take care that we are not seen by the inhabitants. I fear trouble there. It is certain that Hassan Isnich has sent word that we would enter Armenia and try to reach Father O'Hara. I think the intelligence has been carried in advance of us."

"Begorra!" cried Barney, "thot will mane a bit av a shindig, Frankie, me b'y. It's a roight lively toime we may have before we git out av Armenia."

"We may not get out of Armenia at all," said Frank, who was impressed by the grave peril of their situation. "Pro-

fessor Scotch may wait in Jerusalem in vain for me to join him."

"Soay, Frankie."

"What is it, Barney?"

"Pwhoy don't yez have yersilf appointed as the professor's guardian? It's yersilf thot do as ye plaze, an' th' professor does as ye till him to. It's not yer guardian he is at all, at all."

"It is necessary for me to have a guardian in name, whether I have one in fact or no. The professor fills the bill very well."

"An' he towld yez ye couldn't come to Armenia?"

"Yes."

"An' yez had to give him th' shlip an' run away?"

"Yes."

"He wanted yez to visit Jerusalem an' th' Howly Land?"

"Exactly."

"An' ye wrote him a letther sayin' as how ye would visit it later on, afther ye had visited Armenia, and that he moight wait fer yez in Jerusalem?"

"That is the way I have explained it to you."

"Well, Frankie, me b'y, ye're a pache! Av Oi had your snap, Oi'd consider mesilf fixed fer loife. But th' professor may as well give up troying to be th' boss. It's yersilf thot's runnin' th' outfit."

Sadukh was paying very little attention to the conversation between the boys. He was grave and oppressed by the perils which surrounded them. Continually as they rode along he was rising in the saddle to look ahead, or turning to look back.

At last as he was looking back, a cry came from his lips.

"A horseman!" he exclaimed.

The boys looked behind them, and, far along the wretched road they saw a lone horseman who was coming toward them rapidly.

"Is he pursuing us?" asked Frank.

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," was the

answer. "He is riding hard, and will overtake us in a short time. He may be a courier of some sort."

They awaited the approach of the horseman with some anxiety.

As the man came nearer they saw he was dressed like the peasants of the country, with a turban about his head, and yet it was plain that he was mounted on a very fast horse.

He soon came up, saluting them with a gesture, but without speaking.

Sadukh addressed him, but he was looking at Frank, and he made no reply to the Armenian, acting as if he did not hear. Three times Sadukh addressed him, raising his voice each time, but still the man failed to reply.

The boys looked at one another in wonderment, and then Frank spoke to the man, who was plainly a Turk, telling him that Sadukh was addressing him, and motioning toward the Armenian.

The stranger observed the motion, and turned toward Sadukh, who spoke to him in the language of the Turks; but the man shook his head, touching his ears and his mouth with the tips of his fingers.

"He means that he is deaf and dumb," said Sadukh.

"He is a loier by th' clock!" distinctly declared Barney, who was directly behind the man's back.

The Irish lad prepared to meet the fellow if he should turn at this, but by no movement—not the faintest—did the stranger betray that he heard Barney speak.

But the Irish boy was not satisfied, nor was Frank Merriwell, who dropped back at Barney's side, and loudly said:

"Now, Barney, draw your revolver, and we will both shoot him in the back."

They made no movement to draw a weapon, but watched closely to see what result Frank's words would bring about.

The stranger did not start or turn about.

"Begorra! Oi guess he is dafe," said Barney.

"It seems so," said Frank, who was not satisfied, however.

Sadukh tried to converse with the fellow by means of signals, but he could make out no more than that the mute had come from the West and was traveling toward the East, which had seemed evident enough from the first.

They would have permitted him to go along by himself, but he seemed to desire their company, and signaled that he had seen them far ahead of him and had ridden hard to overtake them.

The three drew aside and held a consultation.

They all agreed that they had much rather go along without the company of the stranger; but it would not be an easy thing to get rid of him, and they finally decided to let him accompany them for a time, keeping watch of him constantly.

So when they went on the mute was with them, but they took care that one of them should ride behind him constantly, and keep a wary watch upon him.

Ahead of them lay a rough and wooded section of the country, and Sadukh told them that Kurdish bandits often hid among the forests and fell upon travelers who were passing along the roads.

"When more than one or two persons pass along at the same time they are seldom molested," the Armenian explained.

"As there are now four of us, we may get through all right, but we must hasten to get out of the forests before nightfall."

As they rode forward, a number of persons issued from the first strip of woods and came toward them.

There were two men on foot, one of middle age, and one much younger. Behind the younger man walked a girl, and behind the girl was a woman, mounted on a sorry-looking horse. On each side of the horse was a large basket, and from either basket protruded the head of a

child. The baskets were suspended by wide straps across the horse's back.

Frank and Barney had already discovered that the people of the country often traveled in this manner, so the sight did not create wonderment.

As soon as the party, which was evidently a family consisting of husband, wife, and children, saw the four horsemen before them they were thrown into a state of very evident consternation.

"They are Armenian fugitives," said Sadukh, "and they are afraid of us."

He rode forward, making signals, and crying out something in the Armenian language; but it was plain the fugitives feared deception, and were still badly frightened.

They were in no condition to escape from the horsemen, however, and so they waited for our friends to come up.

Sadukh drew up before the elder man and began talking with him.

As Frank and Barney came up, they saw that the girl was very pretty, but there was a hunted light in her eyes that was not pleasant to see. She turned her face away, and Frank saw that she was trembling.

The old man was greatly excited, and he was talking wildly to Sadukh, while the young man stood near his sister, as if ready to defend her to the last.

In a few moments Sadukh turned to the boys. He was also pale and excited, and his voice shook as he said:

"This good man, Gojaki Musseigh, is from far beyond Diargat, which he passed without entering by going round it. He comes from Kalgore, the home of Father O'Hara, and the place where my sister and father have been so long."

Sadukh paused, and Frank quickly said:

"Something has happened. Tell us the truth."

"There has been an uprising in Kalgore."

"An uprising of the Armenians?"

"No, no—of the Turks, assisted by the Hamidieh Cavalry, or the mounted Kurdish soldiers. It seems that some of the Armenians in Kalgore had obtained and hidden away some weapons. When the uprising took place, they tried to defend their homes, their wives, and their daughters. They did not fire a shot till after several of them had been suddenly slain, and then an old Turk, who was trying to carry off this young girl here, was shot dead by her brother, who possessed a pistol. Up to this time, the Kurd soldiers, who were supposed to be there to protect the town, had looked on and laughed. When the Turk was killed, the chief of the Kurds gave a signal, and the soldiers joined in the work of murder and destruction. A frightful battle followed, but it was all one-sided, as the Armenians were outnumbered five to one, and the Kurds were armed with Martini rifles. In the midst of the fighting, Gojaki Musseigh succeeded in getting all his family together and escaping from the town to the hills, where he concealed himself and his family for many days. At last, when starvation had driven him out, he sought food. He found Kalgore in ruins. The Kurds were gone, but the Turks held the town, nearly a third of which had been burned. He did not dare venture into the place. He secured some grapes, with which he returned to his family. Then they started to flee, the father and the son carrying the small children. Fortunately, Gojaki Musseigh had taken as much money as he could carry about him when driven from his home, and they found an opportunity to buy this horse and the baskets. They have succeeded in coming thus far, but they are filled with fears, and have little hope of finally escaping."

"It is horrible!" muttered Frank, hoarsely. "But, Sadukh, have they told you anything of Lucine, your sister?"

"Nothing. But I have little hope. It

is almost certain that the Kurd soldiers were sent to Kalgore by Mousa Beg, and the attack was mainly for the purpose of carrying off Lucine. Her only escape was the knife which she carried hidden in her bosom."

"Satan floy away wid such haythen b'astes!" cried Barney, fiercely. "It's the divvil's own seum all Turks and Kurds must be."

"What will you do, Sadukh?" asked Frank.

"Go on!" was the savage answer. "I will know the truth concerning Lucine. If she is dead, I may be able to avenge her."

At this moment, the mute was noticed quietly riding away. They called to him to stop, but he paid no heed.

"After him!" exclaimed Sadukh. "If he can hear at all, he has heard too much! Do not let him escape!"

CHAPTER V.

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE FOREST.

Away they went in pursuit of the mute.

Without turning his head, the man urged his horse to a swift gallop.

Again and again they called on him to stop, but he did not seem to hear them, for he never once looked back.

It was not long before they found their horses were not equal to the task of overtaking the man.

"He will escape to tell our enemies that we are coming!" cried Sadukh. "He heard quite enough so that he knows me now, and knows why I am here. He will rouse them against me. There is a price on my head, and five hundred ravenous human wolves will be after it."

"I think not, in case it depends on him to arouse them."

With those words, Frank Merriwell drew a long-barreled revolver.

"Thot's the shtuff, me b'y!" cried

Barney, hoarsely. "Bring th' spalpane down! Wing th' thafe av th' wurruld!"

Frank lifted the revolver.

With a cry, Sadukh reined close to the boy, grasped him by the wrist, and disconcerted his aim.

Frank had pulled trigger, but the bullet intended for the fugitive's horse flew wild.

"What is the matter with you?" he cried, turning rather savagely on Sadukh.

"Do you want that rascal to escape?"

"No; but we must not kill him. It would arouse hundreds of murderous men against us. It would be a fatal move."

"I had no idea of shooting him," declared Frank. "I meant to wound his horse, so we might overtake him. Release my wrist, and see me do the trick."

"No, no!"

"What is the matter?"

"How could you be sure of shooting the horse? Riding over this rough road, and firing at a moving target, you would be as likely to hit the man as the animal, if you touched either."

"Go on wid yez!" burst forth Barney. "Ye have nivver sane Frank Merriwell shoot, man. It's a wizard he is with any kind av a shootin' iron. Oi'd wager me shirrut that he hits th' horse firrust pop."

But Sadukh would not permit Frank to shoot, and the mute soon disappeared in the forest.

They followed. The afternoon was passing, and no time was to be wasted if they wished to get beyond the woods before nightfall.

Sadukh's face was dark and gloomy, and it was plain that he was oppressed by sombre thoughts.

Barney tried to be lively and cheerful, but Frank, naturally jolly and rollicking, was scarcely less grave than the young Armenian.

It was plain that Sadukh was thinking of his wretched relatives who had fallen before the lust, greed, and murderous hate

of their foes. He was wondering if his poor old white-haired father, a corpse, lay rotting beneath the frowning sky, and if the sharpened knife carried by his beautiful sister had found her heart, or if she had faltered at the last moment, and was now being carried to a terrible fate as the captive of Mousa Beg.

The road through the woods was far worse than it had been in the open country. In one or two places trees had fallen across the way, and, instead of removing them, those who traveled in the springless wagons of the country had made a detour and passed around them.

They passed through the first strip of woods, and entered another. The second was denser and darker than the first, and just where it was densest and darkest they found the way blocked by a band of wild-looking men, mounted on tough Arabian horses.

They were Kurds, wearing turbans, bagging trousers, decorated jackets, and sashes of silk or colored webbing. About their clothes were many colors, and they were decidedly picturesque and savage-looking fellows.

All these men were armed, and every man held a weapon in his hand. There were seven of them blocking the road.

Sadukh drew up in alarm, starting to rein his horse about, but Frank caught the animal's bit, crying sharply:

"We cannot turn back! There is a still larger party behind us! We are ambushed!"

"Beggorra! that is the truth!" shouted Barney Mulloy, who had looked back. "They're on both sides av us. Who be they, Oi dunno?"

"Kurds! Bandits!" grated Sadukh. "They have no uniforms, and so they have no right to stop us."

"Then we will not be stopped!" exploded Frank Merriwell. "We will go through them like a charge of shot! Are you ready?"

At this moment the chief of the bandits cried out something, and the Kurds menaced our friends with their guns and pistols.

"They will not dare fire for fear of shooting those behind us," came quickly from Frank's lips. "Ready! Out with your shooting irons! Follow me, and shoot any man who tries to stop you!"

Then a wild yell broke from his lips, electrifying the horse he bestrode, and causing the animal to leap forward.

Sadukh and Barney followed.

"Clear the road!"

Bang!

One of the Kurds fired over Frank's head, hoping to intimidate the boy in that manner.

"You'll have to shoot better than that, old man!" half laughed Merriwell, who seemed to be suddenly possessed by his old reckless, dare-devil spirit.

Then he threw up both hands, each of which held a revolver of the very latest and most approved pattern.

It is safe to say that till that day those Kurds had never seen any shooting like what followed. Frank fired twelve shots in less than six seconds, and scarcely a bullet was wasted.

He shot a pistol from one man's hand, shot another through the leg, dropped three horses, wounded as many more, and went through that line of Kurds like a cyclone, giving such ear-splitting yells that it seemed as if a whole tribe of Sioux Indians had been let loose there in the Armenian forest.

Barney also did a little yelling and some shooting, but, being behind Frank, he had to be careful how he fired, and he afterward confessed that he did not believe he did any damage with his bullets.

As for Sadukh Marderos, dazed and astounded, he permitted his horse to carry him along. He saw horses and men falling, saw other horses rearing and snorting, saw the red flares of pistol flashes burning

through the smoke that quickly gathered, smelled burnt powder, heard Frank Merriwell whooping wildly, and the Kurds crying out in terror and consternation—and then it was all over.

The barrier of bandits was passed, and they were fleeing through the forest, with Frank Merriwell loading his revolvers once more and laughing as he slipped fresh cartridges into the emptied chambers.

A few bullets were sent after them to cut the leaves over their heads, or clip bark from tree limbs and trunks, but, remarkable though it seemed, not one of them, nor their horses, had been harmed.

"An' is it thim fellys ye call bandits an' robbers?" cried Barney, derisively. "It's aisy fruit they are. Whoy, a gang av kids could do a betther job than thot!"

"They were not up to the mark, were they?" chuckled Frank, who seemed to have recovered his spirits by means of the encounter. "And not one of them all seemed to know how to shoot. If those are the desperate Kurds, the Armenians ought to be able to match them."

"Never before have I seen anything like that!" muttered Sadukh, who could not immediately recover from his amazement. "It was most astonishing."

"Oh, thot wur nothing," declared Barney, boastfully.

"But such fearlessness, and such shooting—by a boy."

"Thot's jist a taste av pwhat Frankie can do."

"But where did he learn it?"

"Out West in the United States," replied Frank. "You should see a Western cowboy shoot, Mr. Marderos. I am not a marker beside a skilful cowboy."

"Are all American boys like you?" asked the wondering Armenian.

"Oh, I presume there are American boys who are cowards, but they are almost as scarce as hen's teeth. The average American boy has sand to spare, is

square as a brick, and will stick by his friends through thick and thin. Eh, Barney?"

"Roight ye are, me lad. It's good Oirish blood Oi have in mebody, but America is me home, an' av Oi iver git married an' have choilders, Oi'll tache thim to shtand by America, foight fer America, an' doy fer America av nades be."

"Ah!" sighed Sadukh; "my people are dying for Armenia."

"But they're doin' moightly litttle foighting fer Armenia."

"How can they fight? They are not armed."

"Well, thim, they should be. Av they have lived so long in th' midst av th' inermies av thim an' have not arrumed thimselves, it's th' fault av thimsilves."

"You do not understand. They have not been allowed to have arms. Whenever they have obtained any, they have been arrested and disarmed."

"An' have they allowed th' Turks to do thot? They should av known all th' toime pwhat wur loable to take place, an' they should have prepared fer it. Outside av th' big places, there seem to be more Armenians in this country than Turks an' Kurds. Av they were well arrumed, they moight roise and lich th' shtuffin' out av th' bloody spalpanes."

"Oh, you do not understand," declared Sadukh, wearily.

"Begobs! thot's roight. Av th' Oirish had Turruey to foight against, they'd be free in a wake."

"You do not understand," Sadukh repeated.

"Listen!" warned Frank, suddenly drawing up.

They did so, and far behind them they heard hoof-beats.

"Horses!" cried Barney.

"The Kurds!" exclaimed Sadukh, fearfully.

"We are pursued, came quietly from Frank Merriwell's lips.

"That is right," said the Armenian, "and now they are enraged and aroused against us. They will destroy us."

"They would have destroyed us if we had submitted and fallen into their hands," said Frank. "We did the only thing there was to be done. Let them come. If they crowd us too closely, we will give them another dose of medicine. Eh, Barney?"

"Thot's pwhat, me b'y," nodded the Irish lad. "Nixt toime we'll use thim worse than we did th' firrust."

"It is useless to fight them. They will arouse others, and the whole country will be up in arms against us."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"I am going on," came firmly from Sadukh. "I am going to try to find my father and sister; but I advise you to turn back."

"Turn back?"

"Pwhat's thot?"

"What do you take us for?"

"Is it cowards ye think we are?"

"No, no! But you are going to certain death."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Frank. "We'll take our chances with you. Come on."

Away they went through the forest, riding as fast and as hard as the nature of the road and the condition of their horses would permit.

At intervals they stopped and listened, and still they continued to hear the sound of oncoming horses behind them.

Frank was for halting in a favorable place, and giving the pursuers a volley, but Sadukh would not hear of it.

"It is useless," he declared. "We would make them all the fiercer. Even now they will follow us like bloodhounds."

Frank could not understand the Arme-

nian. In some things, Sadukh seemed brave enough, but in others he was utterly lacking in nerve. He seemed to fear the Kurds to such an extent that he was opposed to making any offensive move against them.

About Sadukh there were some things the boy admired, but, at the same time, there were other things which stamped him as being weak and lacking in energy in certain directions.

Frank wondered if the whole Armenian nation could be judged by this one specimen. If so, he believed he understood why the Armenians had seemed to submit like sheep to the slaughter.

It aroused him when he remembered that there was a leading paper in New York city that was doing its best to prejudice its readers against the Armenians by endeavoring to make the readers believe that the Armenians were the aggressors, and that the Turks had simply retaliated in self-defense.

Frank wondered that there were not more accounts of Turks being killed by Armenians. He wondered that the Armenians who knew they were doomed did not form themselves into offensive bodies to slay as many of their murderous foes as possible before they were destroyed.

And yet he saw how such an act on the part of the Armenians would be playing into the hands of the Sultan, who could claim with some show of truth that revolutions were going on in Armenia, and he could continue the butchery under the pretense that he was putting down the rebellion.

In the meantime, the great powers of Europe would stand back with a show of bared teeth, growling at each other, and not one of them would dare intervene to save the wretched people who were being swept from the face of the earth.

So the two boys and the Armenian rode onward through the forests, hearing the

sounds of pursuit occasionally, but never catching a glimpse of their pursuers.

Night came.

The forests were left behind, and then the lights of the town of Diargat gleamed before them.

They halted, undecided on the proper course to pursue.

As they sat talking and speculating, once more they heard the beating hoofs of their pursuers' horses.

"There are scores of them," said Frank, who could tell by the sound. "The Kurds, with whom we had the encounter, have been joined by others, and now they are pressing us hard."

"As I knew they would," came from Sadukh, with a wearied, hopeless accent. "We cannot escape. The people before us have been told that we are coming, and the Kurds are behind us. We are in a trap."

"Begorra! we'll have to be moving loively, ur th' Kurruds will be on us," said Barney, who was listening to the swiftly approaching hoof-beats.

"That's so," agreed Frank Merriwell. "We have no time to make a detour and go around this village."

"What can we do?" asked Sadukh.

"Go through it! Come on! Follow me!"

Down the road toward the twinkling lights galloped the horse that bore Frank Merriwell, and his companions were close behind him. As they rode, the boys felt for their weapons.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FALL OF THE WHIP.

Straight into the town Frank Merriwell led the way.

The sounds of clattering hoofs were heard by the inhabitants, and, as if awaiting something of the sort, they ran out into the streets.

"Straight ahead!" Frank called to

those behind him. "Stop for nothing. We must go through the town in a hurry."

They urged their horses to the fastest pace, nor did they stop in the least because a number of persons seemed to block the street before them.

Into the town, through the town, on they went.

Voices called to them, the inhabitants fled to either side of the streets to avoid them; they were ordered to halt, and Sadukh heard some one cry out that they were known.

And then, when it was seen that nothing else would stop them, bullets were sent after them.

The leaden balls whistled about their ears and sang over their heads, but still they clattered onward.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Frank Merriwell. "Those fellows waited too long before they began to shoot. Is any one hit?"

"Begorra! Oi'm all roight," assured Barney. "But some av thim bits av lead fled moighty near me head."

"Are you all right, Sadukh?" asked Frank.

There was no answer.

Frank turned about and peered through the darkness.

At their heels galloped the riderless horse of the Armenian.

Sadukh was gone.

Frank drew up, catching the animal by the bit, and crying to Barney:

"Hold hard, old man! Sadukh is gone! Stop short."

"Pwhat's thot?" hoarsely demanded the Irish lad, reining his horse back. "Where th' blazes could th' crayther have gone?"

"That is what I would like to know. He must have been killed outright by a shot, for he did not cry out when he fell from the saddle."

"It's Satan's own luck this is. Pwhat'll we do now?"

"Wait a bit. Give me a moment to think."

Frank did not take more than ten seconds, and then he said:

"We must know what has become of Sadukh. We cannot go on from this place while there is a doubt in our mind."

"Roight ye are, me hearty. Sadukh is me brother-in-law, ye know, an' Biddy made me promise over an' over that Oi would bring him back soafe to her. God bliss her blue oies! It'll break her all up in business av Oi fail to kape me worrud."

"Listen!"

From the town came wild shouts, answered by fierce yells which Frank Merriwell fancied he understood.

"The Kurds who were pursuing us have arrived," he said. "They will come on in pursuit directly. We must give them the slip."

"How can we do it?"

"That is easy. Follow me."

He dismounted, and Barney followed his example. Then Frank led his own horse and Sadukh's from the road into a barren field, and the Irish lad followed.

From the town came other shouts, immediately followed by the sound of horsemen coming along the road toward the boys.

"Make haste," came in a whisper from Frank. "Get as far away as possible, for it is said those Kurds have sharp eyes."

They urged the horses along till they saw a line of low brushwood. This they approached. Then Frank suddenly said:

"We must be still now, for they will be passing in a moment. Hold your horse by the nose, so he will not neigh. Keep his head and your own down, if possible, so no more than this line of bushes may be seen."

A few seconds later, they had the satisfaction of hearing the horsemen gallop

past, of seeing a blur of moving forms against the sky, of watching them swiftly vanish along the road, and of listening till the hoof-beats died out in the distance.

"So far everything is working finely," said Frank, with intense satisfaction. "Now we must hide these horses, and then we will go back into Diargat. We will find out what has become of Sadukh."

"Av he has been killed, what thin?"

"We will make our plans when we find out what has happened to him."

"Av course we'll have to turrun back?"

"Without making an attempt to save Lucine Marderos, or at least to learn what has befallen her? I don't know. I am interested in her, and I feel like doing everything possible to save her. Kalgore is not over thirty miles away. We could reach it to-morrow."

"We moight av we wur allowed."

Both boys were greatly affected by the sudden and somewhat singular disappearance of their Armenian companion. Frank felt as if they had been struck a crushing blow, but he did his best to conceal the true state of his feelings from Barney.

On the other hand, Barney was greatly discouraged, for, although Sadukh had not seemed a man of great resolution and unquestioned courage, he was in his own country, and he had acted as guide for them.

That Sadukh would be missed beyond measure both lads knew.

It cannot be truthfully said that Barney entertained any strong feeling of affection for his brother-in-law, although he was inclined to think Biddy had not done so bad in her choice of a husband.

It must be acknowledged that the Irish lad would have been far more satisfied had his sister seen fit to marry a "son av th' Ould Sod."

No matter how much the boys felt the loss of Sadukh, they felt that there was

no time for them to sit down and mourn about it.

"They must be up and doing" all the time.

Leading the horses along the line of bushes, they found a place where they could pass through, and then, down in a little hollow, they hitched the animals to some trees.

When this was accomplished, Frank led the way toward the village.

All seemed quiet in the place.

The boys moved forward swiftly and cautiously, reaching the road, along which they made their way, looking for their comrade, and calling softly to him at intervals.

They could not be certain he had not been wounded and had fallen from his horse, after which he might have crept out beside the road somewhere, and thus escaped detection when the pursuing Kurds clattered along.

But they saw nothing of him, and no voice answered their calls.

Into the village they crept, each with a revolver clutched in his hand, ready for any horde that might suddenly rise up around them.

In many of the houses the lights had gone out, and the places were dark.

They came to a quarter where the houses were in ruins, having been pulled down and destroyed by fire.

They knew this was where the Armenians in Diargat had lived.

At last, they fancied they heard shouts coming from a brightly lighted house at a distance, and they made their way toward it, going forward with renewed caution.

As they came nearer the house, they heard coarse laughter and loud voices.

There were no curtains at the windows of the house, and the boys soon reached a position where they could look into a room which was well filled with bearded Turks.

Frank caught Barney by the arm.

"Look!" he whispered. "There is Sadukh!"

It was true. The Armenian was in the midst of the crowd, and that he was a captive they instantly saw.

One side of his head was covered with blood, showing that he had been wounded.

Sadukh's hands were bound behind him, and it was apparent that he was a prisoner.

His hat was gone, his coat was gone, and his vest had been stripped away. He stood in his shirt and trousers, and the former was ripped and torn in a manner that seemed to indicate he had struggled fiercely before submitting to capture.

There was a dejected, hopeless look on the unfortunate fellow's face, as if he felt that his case was hopeless. All the spirit seemed gone out of his body.

"Poor divvil!" muttered Barney. "It's a bad shrape he's in."

"That's right," whispered Frank. "We must find a way to get him out of it."

"How can we, Oi dunno?"

"Nor do I know, but we will try to find a way. But look there! See that man with the pointed beard and the cruel eyes! I know him!"

"Ye do thot?"

"I do."

"Who is th' spalpane?"

"Hassan Isnick, or I am a chump!"

"Roight ye are! It is th' ould whilp himself! But how in th' name av all th' saints did th' ould divvil git here? We left him in London."

"He must have followed us. He must have been ahead of us, for it seems certain he was in this town when we attempted to dash through."

"An' now Sadukh has fell inter th' ould skunk's hands. That is harrud luck. Look, Frankie, they're shtrippin' th' shirrut off Sadukh."

This was true. Several of the laughing Turks had seized him, and were tearing the shirt from his back.

When this was done, his hands were suddenly freed and bound together in front of him, the cords being tied about his thumbs. To these a stout rope was attached, and the rope ran over a beam above the head of the unfortunate Armenian.

Hassan Isnuck, his face showing the most malignant hatred, gave an order, and several caught hold of the rope and drew upon it till Sadukh was pulled upon his tiptoes.

As Frank Merriwell witnessed this, drops of cold perspiration broke out on his face, and he felt himself quivering all over.

"Steady!" he muttered, controlling his nerves by a great effort. "This is no time to get broken up."

Hassan Isnuck gave another order, and then a man with a rawhide whip in his hand approached.

It was the mute who had ridden with them that day.

"Howly Saint Patherick!" gurgled Barney Mulloy. "Th' bloody bastes are goin' to whip him."

Frank said nothing.

Hassan Isnuck took a position in front of the wounded and tortured Armenian. Leering evilly at Sadukh, the vengeful Turk demanded:

"Where is your sister, dirty dog?"

Sadukh made no reply.

"Speak!" screamed the Turk, wrathfully—"speak, heathen dog! or by the beard of the Prophet, you shall be lashed till you faint! Even then, you shall be revived and lashed again!"

Sadukh lifted his head. There was no hope in his eyes, but Hassan Isnuck beheld defiance there—beheld a determination to die rather than give the grinning Turks the least satisfaction.

"I do not know where my sister is," said Sadukh.

"Liar!" cried Hassan Isnuck, striking him in the face with a clinched hand. "You know where that dirty old wretch called Father O'Hara has hidden her. You are going to find her, or you were going till we stopped you."

"That is true, but till you told me with your own tongue, I knew not that she had escaped the fate of other beautiful Armenian girls. I feared she had fallen into the hands of the beastly Kurds. I feared Mousa Beg had triumphed. You must know that you have given me some satisfaction by telling me that she is safe yet a little longer. You may torture me to death, but you cannot make my tongue

tell what I do not know. Kill me quickly, and have it over!"

"Oh, no, dirty Christian! You are not to escape so! You killed my brother, and I swore by Allah that I would never rest till I had tasted your blood. The time for me to keep that oath has come, but you shall die a hundred deaths in one. You shall be lashed till you faint, and then your toe nails and finger nails shall be drawn. After that you shall be pierced by red-hot wires, and then we will skin you alive. May all Christians meet such a death!"

"All Christians will not meet such a death, nor all Armenians," came from Sadukh, who was already suffering terrible torture from the strain on his thumbs. "The end is near for the murderous Sultan, Abdul the Condemned! The blood of thousands upon thousands of murdered Christians cry out to God, and soon the nations of the earth shall rise and sweep him from power to destruction! Then the hour of retaliation shall come, and the followers of the false Prophet, the murderers of the Christians, shall repent in tears of blood! As they have destroyed by the sword, so they shall be destroyed by the sword! And then in all this land the religion of Mohammed shall be no more!"

Hassan Isnuck fairly writhed with rage.

"Liar!" he snarled, again striking Sadukh in the face. "Such a thing can never be! Aziz, lay on!"

Then the whip in the hands of the mute cut through the air, and the lash fell across Sadukh Marderos' bare back!

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORK OF TWO BRAVE BOYS.

The flesh quivered beneath the cruel blow, and a long, bloody-blue welt showed where the whip had fallen.

A hoarse gasp of unutterable pain came from the Armenian's lips, and his body swayed convulsively.

His eyes started from their sockets, and his dry lips were drawn far back from his clinched teeth. His jaws hardened on either side, and deep furrows seemed to cut curving tracks down his cheeks in a fraction of a second.

Swish!

Again the whip fell across the shrinking flesh. Again a rasping gasp for breath

came from between those gleaming teeth. Again the wretched victim started convulsively, and then his body swayed and whirled about, while the strain of his full weight came upon his thumbs.

A white froth that seemed thick as cotton forced itself through his teeth and fluttered with his breathing. His eyes bulged more and more, and his face became as bloodless as the face of a corpse.

The assembled witnesses within that room laughed harshly.

"Lay on, Aziz!" snarled Hassan Isnick—"lay on till the cries of the dirty dog make music for our ears!"

The whip was lifted again.

It did not fall.

Outside the window there was a flash of fire, the crack of a pistol, and the mute fell to the floor with a bullet in his brain!

Barney Mulloy had fired the shot, and his aim had been true.

A second later a second shot rang out, and the bullet cut the cord above Sadukh Marderos' hands.

Then there were two other reports, and the two lamps in the room were shattered, plunging the place into total darkness in a moment.

Crash!—the window was broken by some heavy object.

"This way, Sadukh!" cried the familiar voice of Frank Merriwell. "It's your only chance. Make a break."

Dimly the Armenian seemed to realize what had happened. He knew the boys had come to his rescue, and he could see the window from which the sash and glass had been smashed. He ran toward the window, leaped, and landed on the ground outside.

In a moment he felt himself seized on either side by strong hands, jerked up-right, forced along, while a voice hissed in his ear:

"Run, Sadukh—run for your life! It is our only chance!"

He did run. Gathering all his energies, he used his legs as best he could, allowing those hands to guide him.

He was still bewildered, but he knew Frank and Barney had come to his rescue. That they dared do such a thing seemed marvelous to him, but they were there, and their hands were guiding him.

Behind them the baffled Turks yelled

and cursed. They came rushing out of the house, but were confused in the darkness.

Frank and Barney darted around a house, drawing Sadukh along. They stumbled over something, and fell sprawling into a ditch. When the Armenian tried to get upon his feet, he uttered a groan.

"What is the matter?" asked Frank, with great anxiety.

"My ankle," replied the man. "Something has happened to it."

"It's Satan's own luck!" growled Barney. "But nivver mind, me b'y. Brace up, an' we will rache th' horses."

"The horses? Where are they?"

"Down beyant a bit av a ways. Shtiffen yer back, ould man."

They dragged the Armenian from the ditch, but he limped painfully and groaned a bit when he tried to walk.

"I am hurt bad," he said. "Every step seems like driving knives through my ankle. I'm afraid I'm done for."

"Whist, mon! Ye make me toired!" growled the Irish lad. "It's a bit av shtick-to-it ye lack. Had yez rayther be shkinned aloive, ur will yez walk on yer fut loike a mon?"

"Wait a moment," directed Frank. "I have dropped my revolver."

Back into the ditch he slid, and there he felt around for the weapon, which he could not see.

"Come on, ye slowniss!" hissed Barney. "It's surrounded we'll be in a minute! Look aloive, Frankie!"

The cries of the enraged Turks showed they were spreading out and hurrying through the village, seeking to find the rescuers of Sadukh Marderos.

"I can't afford to lose this revolver," muttered Frank. "I am liable to need it the worst way."

"It's yer loife ye nade more, me b'y. Come on!"

"All right."

Frank uttered the words with satisfaction, for his hand had encountered the missing weapon, and he scrambled out of the ditch with the revolver in his grasp.

By this time, however, the Turks were close about them, and, as they started away, with Sadukh limping between

them, a number of men came around the building, and they were seen.

Then a mad yell went up—a cry that told all hearers that the fugitives had been discovered. That cry was answered from all parts of the village.

Sadukh caught his breath.

"It's no use!" he said. "You cannot get away with me! Let me go! Save yourselves! Just free my hands, and give me a knife! I will kill one of them, at least!"

"Not on yer birthday, ould man!" cried Barney.

"We are not built of that kind of stuff," said Frank. "We will all get away together, or we will all croak right here."

This kind of nerve was something the Armenian could not understand. True Barney was related to him by marriage, but he had known that fathers deserted their children, and children fled and abandoned their parents in time of deadly danger. In Armenia since the outrages began it had seemed that every man and every woman looked out for himself or herself, regardless of relatives or friends.

And Frank Merriwell was in no way related to Sadukh.

"Keep back!" shouted Frank, to the approaching Turks.

They answered with a yell, and rushed toward the trio.

"I think we will have to let them know we're here," said Frank.

He whirled about and fired two shots, shooting low, hoping to hit the legs of the pursuers.

There was a cry of pain, and one of the Turks fell.

That brought the others to a halt, for they remembered the wonderful shooting that had cut Sadukh Marderos free and extinguished the lamps in the house.

With angry cries, they fired a perfect fusillade of shots, and the bullets whistled all about the fugitives.

While this was taking place, Barney had freed Sadukh's hands.

Frank whirled about, and once more the boys urged the Armenian on, each grasping an arm, and fairly carrying him over the ground.

As soon as the Turks saw the trio was in flight again, they started in hot pur-

suit, seeming to give tongue like a pack of hounds.

"We'll have to keep you from crowding too close," muttered Frank, as he sent a bullet over his left shoulder.

It was purely a chance shot, but it found a living target, and another of the pursuers fell.

Such shooting as this seemed marvelous to the astonished Turks, and they fell back a little, again discharging their weapons in a fruitless fusillade.

Although groaning at every bound, Sadukh was forced to keep up, for the boys literally dragged him along.

Frank felt sure he could make his way directly to the spot where the horses were hidden, and Barney left everything to him.

For all that Sadukh was lame, they made good speed, and kept their pursuers at a distance by stopping to fire an occasional shot.

But the entire town was aroused, and it seemed that every man in the village was in pursuit of the trio.

At last, Frank came to a sudden halt.

"The horses are down there in that hollow, Barney," he said. "I will try to hold these yelping curs back while you get Sadukh mounted and prepare for the start. Be lively."

"Thot I will, me lad."

The Irish boy was in the habit of doing exactly as Frank directed, without pausing to question or remonstrate, and he hustled the Armenian down into the hollow.

Frank crouched behind some rocks, and fired three or four shots at the pursuers, bringing them to a halt.

Then, in the darkness, he fancied he could see and hear them spreading out to surround him.

He waited coolly for a signal from Barney.

It came in a few moments, and, as the sharp whistle rang out, Frank fired two more shots, crouched low to the ground, and dashed down into the hollow.

"Here ye are, me b'y," called Barney.

He was quickly mounted, and then, with yells of defiance, the three fugitives made a dash for the road.

The pursuers were furious. They howled with rage, and fired a score of

wild shots into the darkness, but they knew further pursuit was useless.

Frank Merriwell laughed his defiance.

"Such an adventure as this makes one feel some satisfaction in life," he said. "Our only mistake was in waiting till Sadukh had been lashed twice. We should have begun operations before the first blow fell."

The Armenian seemed unable to believe his boy companions had actually rescued him from the clutches of half a hundred Turks who had started to torture him to death.

"If all the Irish and Americans are like you two, those nations combined ought to whip the world," he said.

"Hurro!" cried Barney, with enthusiasm. "It's thot soame Oi have said a hundred toimes! Th' Unoitied Shtates and Ould Oireland ag'in th' worruld!"

They reached the road, along which they urged their horses at the best speed the animals were capable of making.

"We will ease up after we get away from the vicinity of the village," said Frank.

"Do yez think we'll be able to shake th' spalpanes so aisy?" asked the Irish boy.

"I scarcely fancy it will be an easy job, although I am pretty sure they will not crowd us hard for some little time. By to-morrow the whole country hereabouts will be aroused to the fact that we are making things rather lively. We'll have a pack of yelping hounds constantly on our track."

"And you might have escaped if you had left me alone," said Sadukh.

"What of that? We saw you strung up by your thumbs, and under the lash. Do you fancy we could have left you to be tortured to death in such a manner? Well, I should guess not!"

"Not av we know oursilves, an' we think we do," put in Barney.

"I decided that my time had come," said the Armenian.

"An' seemed set on bein' kilt anyhow. Ye didn't fale loiike escapin' at all, at all. Is thot th' way th' Armenians do whin th' Turruks get afther thim, Oi dunno?"

"Is it strange that we sometimes regard our situation as hopeless, and give up to die?"

"If I had done so," said Frank, "I should have been killed a number of times in my life. It is the never-say-die sort of pluck that pulls a fellow though."

"I do not think I understand you boys," admitted the Armenian.

They were tired and hungry, but did not feel like stopping, for they did not know at what minute they might hear pursuers behind them.

Somewhere in advance were the deceived Kurds whom they had tricked, and they knew there was danger of running into the bloodthirsty bandits at any time.

Still they rode onward.

Barney gave Sadukh his coat, for the night air cut the unfortunate fellow to the bone. His ankle pained him constantly, and he was conscious at all times of the welts across his back, where the lash of the whip had fallen.

After a time, they came down into a fertile little valley, where there were some houses and vineyards.

They dared not arouse the people of the place, but they entered the vineyards and ate grapes till their hunger was appeased to a certain extent.

This done, they led their horses through the valley on the grass by the roadside, which was a bitter task for Sadukh, whose set teeth sometimes failed to hold back the groans that came from his throat.

Having passed through the valley, they mounted their nearly exhausted horses, and went forward again.

They were finally forced to halt and give themselves and the horses a resting spell.

The animals cropped the grass, while the boys and their Armenian companion slept. As they had stopped some distance from the regular road, they were in no great danger of discovery.

The night was far spent when Frank awoke, feeling stiff in every joint and chilled to the bone.

By his side Barney slept heavily. A little farther away, Sadukh was groaning and muttering, occasionally calling his sister's name.

Afar in the east a bright star shone.

The wind seemed to come up from the lowlands, moaning faintly, weirdly, with an appealing sound, as if the murdered

thousands of blood-stained Armenia were calling to the world for vengeance.

Two of the tired horses were lying down, but they got up as soon as Frank stirred. They moved as if stiffened and beaten by the jaunt of the day before.

"And there is no means of knowing what may lay before them to-day," thought the boy.

He shook Barney, who sat up and grappled with him, fiercely grating:

"It's mesilf thot's a match fer any bloody ould Turruk that—— Is it you, Frankie?"

"Sure," said Frank. "It is near morning. We must arouse Sadukh."

"Oh, me stomach!" groaned the Irish lad, pressing his hands to the part mentioned. "It's impty as Mother Hubbard's cubbard, begobs!"

"We must find some means of obtaining food. We cannot go without something to eat. I am faint myself for the need of it."

They aroused Sadukh, who sat up and stared at them in a bewildered way, finally asking:

"What is it? I was dreaming. I thought I had found her—dear little Lucine!"

"If we find her at all, we must be moving."

The man groaned.

"My back—it feels as if it had been cut in two."

"You will have to forget your back for the time. Come on."

They grasped him and drew him to his feet. When he attempted to step he toppled over, crying out with the pain from his ankle.

The boys saddled the horses, and then assisted Sadukh to mount.

Soon they were upon the road, riding slowly onward again.

The stars paled, and dawn approached.

Had their hunger been appeased, they would have felt much better for their rest, although the chill of the night lingered in their bones.

At last, as they were passing through a thin piece of woods, a man suddenly appeared before them, crying out something, and flinging up both hands.

In a twinkling, Frank Merriwell had

snatched out a revolver and covered the fellow.

"Don't shoot!" cried Sadukh, catching Frank's arm. "I know him!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DYING ARMENIAN.

"Begorra! it's lucky fer th' chap thot ye do," said Barney, who had also drawn a revolver. "In wan second more he'd been so full av holes that he'd nivver cast a shadder again."

"Tell him to come forward," directed Frank.

Sadukh did so, and the man ran quickly toward them, holding out his arms to the Armenian, and saying something that caused the boys' companion to show no small amount of excitement.

Words flew fast between the two for some moments, and then Sadukh turned to the boys, saying:

"This is Terrzi Gobra, a good neighbor of ours. He aided my father and sister to escape when Kalgore was sacked."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Frank. "This is interesting. Does he bring you news of your sister?"

"Yes. He says she is in a cave with my father, some miles from here. It was found impossible to proceed farther on account of the condition of my father, who is very low."

"Well, it's dead luck we're in to meet this gentlemon!" cried the Irish lad. "How ivver did it happen?"

"Father O'Hara heard I was on the way to Kalgore, and he sent word to Lucine. She engaged Terrzi to watch for me on the road, and he has done so most faithfully."

It seemed somewhat remarkable to Frank that the man should have seen them at that hour, but Sadukh knew him well, and so there could be no danger of deceit.

Terrzi Gobra took the lead, and they followed him.

The two Armenians rode in advance, conversing earnestly in their own language.

It was not long before they left the regular road and passed through the forest by means of a narrow path, where they were obliged to proceed one at a time.

The country became rougher, and they

soon found themselves in a mountainous region.

The sun rose, and they still pressed forward.

At a clear stream they drank and watered their horses.

The animals were in a bad way, but they continued to urge them onward.

At last they came to a small and narrow valley, where there were grass and water. In this valley the horses were left, each of them hitched with a line of considerable length, so they could graze.

From this point the region grew wilder still, but they were not forced to advance more than a mile before the cave was reached. Sadukh seemed nerved in a remarkable manner, and he managed to limp along.

Turrzi point out the mouth of the cave, and Sadukh hurried forward, his heart fluttering wildly.

"The others followed him.

When the opening was reached, Sadukh paused to call:

"Lucine! Lucine!"

A faint, joyful cry was his answer, and, a moment later, a young girl ran out of the darkness and threw herself into his arms. He strained her to his breast, and kissed her again and again, while she wept for joy.

"Begorra!" muttered Barney, turning his back on the brother and sister, "it's a foine bit av sanery we have hereabouts, Frankie."

"That's quite true, Barney," said Frank, who had already turned around. "This is very picturesque."

"It's reward enough to pay us fer comin', Oi think."

"I am well satisfied."

After some minutes, Sadukh spoke to them, and they turned around, hats in hand.

"Friends," said Sadukh, proudly, "this is my sister, of whom I have told you so much—this is Lucine. She can speak English quite well for Father O'Hara taught her. Lucine, this is Frank Merriwell, the brave American boy of whom I have just told you; and this is Barney Mulloy, the brother of Biddy, my wife."

They saw that she was, indeed, very beautiful, for all of the look of fear in her

eyes. She was dressed in the picturesque costume of the country, and they did not mind that her clothes were torn in places. She was as graceful as a gazelle, and as dainty as a delicate flower. Her cheeks had been pale, but the color was in them as she gave a hand to each of the boys, saying slowly, and with some effort:

"My brodar he tell me all 'bout you. Oh, I lofe you for you be so good to him! Brafe, brafe boys!"

Barney Mulloy nearly fainted on the spot. He pressed a hand over his heart, bowing profoundly, and stammering:

"Begorra! it's nivver a worrud Oi kin say."

Frank was far more collected, but he felt his heart flutter as her hand rested within his own.

"We have done our best to reach you, Miss Marderos," he said. "And now we are ready to do our best to get you back to the coast and out of the country."

"Fadar!" she suddenly exclaimed, as if struck by a thought. "We forget him."

She grasped Sadukh and led him into the cave. The boys decided to remain outside till the meeting between father and son was over.

"Be me soul!" gasped Barney, his face expressing his deep satisfaction, "it's a pache she is, an' no mistake! Oi nivver saw her aquil in all me loife."

"She is certainly a remarkably pretty girl," agreed Frank. "I can understand why a Kurd chief like Mousa Beg should make such great efforts to obtain possession of her."

"Begorra! no Moosa Beg shall iver have her as long as Oi am able to raise me hand to foight! Oi'll foight fer her till Oi doie, av Oi don't git killed!"

Frank smiled.

"It seems that you are hard hit, Barney."

"Thot's pwhat Oi am, me b'y," confessed the Irish lad, with perfect candor. "It's nivver before wur Oi shtruck loike this. An' now let me give ye a bit of advice."

"Go ahead."

"Ye have girruls enough av yer own."

"Well?"

"Kape off me presarves."

"In other words——"

"Oi want a free field. It's Inza Bur-

rage, Elsie Bellwood, an' tin ur twinty other girruls are shstuck on yez, an' now Oi don't want yez to be after making love to this wan."

"All right," laughed Frank. "What you say goes. I am not in the habit of making love to so many girls, as you very well know."

"Sure an' Oi do, Frankie. Don't take offense. It's the girruls pwhat fall in love wid yez, an' nivver a bit to blame they are at all, at all."

"I will give you all the chance you ask with Miss Mardeross, and may luck go with you."

"Thank yez, Frankie. Av Oi could get that girrul, Oi dunno as Oi would iver go back to Fardale. Oi'd git married an' settle down."

Then Barney suddenly clapped his hand over his mouth, and turned away in great consternation, for Lucine had appeared at the mouth of the cave.

She called them in, and Barney pretended to be very much engrossed with the surrounding scenery, till Frank gave his sleeve a pull.

"Do yez think she hearrus pwhat Oi said?" anxiously whispered the Irish lad, as they moved toward the cave.

"Oh, I guess she didn't notice," smiled Frank.

They entered the cave, stooping slightly to do so. It was rather dark in there, and they could not see very well. As they groped their way forward, Lucine's hands touched and guided them.

In a few minutes their eyes became better accustomed to the gloom, and they could see an old white-haired man, who lay on a bed of grass, with Sadukh kneeling beside him. A short distance away, Terrzi Gobra was sitting on a stone.

Sadukh looked up.

"This is my father," he said, brokenly, "my poor old father!"

The old man feebly lifted a withered hand, holding it toward the boys, and speaking to Sadukh, who said:

"He wants to take the hand of both of you, and he thanks you for being such true friends to his son."

Frank knelt beside the bed, and grasped the old man's hand in both of his. That hand was cold as ice, and the boy in-

stantly comprehended that the death-chill was on it.

Barney knelt on the other side, taking the hand in turn.

The father spoke earnestly to Sadukh, who listened, and then turned to his youthful companions, saying:

"He has seen a vision, and he feels confident that we will escape from Armenia and reach a land of safety. But that is not all his vision told him. He has seen a great uprising in America—an uprising of Christian men and women who demanded justice for the Armenians. He has seen Christian America aroused and calling to other Christian nations to join her in throttling the corrupt Turkish power. He has seen America sending her warships to the Bosphorus, while laggard England held back. He has seen Abdul the Condemned in his hour of woe and retribution. He has seen Turkey torn and divided, but the Armenians set free. He has seen spectral armies of murdered thousands rise from their graves to rejoice over the downfall of the vile Mohammedan power. And in the end justice triumphed. You may say it was a dream; but he claims that he has seen a vision."

The boys were greatly impressed.

"Tell him," said Frank, "that I hope all he has seen may come true. Tell him that the Americans sympathize with the unfortunate Armenians, and stand ready to help them when the time comes to do so."

Sadukh repeated the boy's words, and the old man listened with an expression of satisfaction.

Then the boys drew away, leaving father and son together.

Lucine brought some bread. It was hard and dry, but the boys were so hungry that it tasted very good. They washed it down with some spring water from a wooden bucket.

Lucine explained how Father O'Hara managed to send them food, and how he had informed them that Sadukh and the boys were coming.

Terrzi Gobra seemed tired, for he lay down on the rocks, curled up, and fell asleep.

The boys were also tired, and they found a fairly comfortable spot after they had satisfied their hunger in a measure,

and lay down. In a remarkably brief space of time they were sleeping soundly.

It was hours later when the boys awoke, and the old man on the bed of grass was breathing his last.

Beside the bed, Sadukh, Lucine, and Terrzi Gobra were kneeling in prayer. Sadukh was praying aloud in his own language, and the appeal to God thrilled the lads, although they could not understand a word he uttered.

Suddenly the old man sat up. The afternoon sun was streaming into the mouth of the cave, and a golden beam fell on the wan face of the dying Armenian, who was a hunted outcast in his own country. It lighted up his features with a beautiful halo, and a smile of hope, joy, and peace made that face seem almost saint-like. He stretched out his thin arms and bloodless hands to the light, and then, with a great cry that was like the joyous shout of a weary wanderer who had reached his home at last, he fell backward into Sadukh's supporting clasp.

The young Armenian gently lowered his father to the bed of grass, took a long look into his face, and then said:

"It is over!"

CHAPTER IX.

FLIGHT AND AMBUSH.

They buried him in a crevice in the cave, rolling great stones up about the opening, so that it was entirely inclosed, and he was entombed.

Sadukh prayed. Frank and Barney knelt, with their heads uncovered. Lucine was weeping, and every sob seemed like a knife-thrust in the heart of the Irish boy.

It was ended at last, and they turned away.

Then it was that Terrzi Gobra uttered a shout of fear, and pointed toward the mouth of the cave.

There they saw the face of a man who was peering in upon them. It was a bearded, evil face.

Frank whipped out a revolver, but the man dodged back and disappeared before he could fire.

"It is a spy!" cried Sadukh, in great alarm. "Out and after him! He must not escape! Stop him some way!"

The boys rushed from the cave, with Gobra close behind them.

"Where is he?" asked Frank, looking around for the peeper.

"Gone!" gasped Barney. "Wur he heare at all, Oi dunno?"

The Armenian caught Frank by the arm and pointed. Then the boy caught a glimpse of the spy skipping swiftly away behind some great rocks.

"Come on!" grated Frank. "We'll try to run him down."

Away he leaped, and Barney followed.

The ground was rough, but Frank was a sprinter, and he was as sure-footed as a mountain goat. He felt confident of overtaking the spy.

The man darted into some bushes, and Frank found the double task of watching the fugitive and watching where he placed his feet was not easy.

Of a sudden, he slipped, and fell amid some rocks. The fall stunned him for a few seconds, and, when he recovered, the spy had escaped.

Frank was disgusted, but he said:

"It will not make so much difference, for we must leave that cave anyhow, and the sooner we do so the better."

He was relieved to find he had not broken any bones by his fall, and did not seem to be badly injured.

They hurried back to the cave, where they found the three Armenians in a state of great excitement.

"Mousa Beg or Hassan Isnick will know where we are as soon as the spy can carry word," declared Sadukh.

"Then by the time Mousa Beg or Hassan Isnick arrives here we must be far away," said Frank.

To this all agreed, and they were soon hurrying from the cave.

Sadukh's ankle was in bad shape, although he had been treating it with cloths dipped in cold water. In order for him to get along it was necessary for some one to assist him constantly.

The horses were found where they had been left in the valley.

The animals were much rested and refreshed. When they had been watered from a little brook, they seemed in fair condition.

"We shall be followed," said Sadukh.

"In which case we will try to bother

our pursuers," observed Frank. "We must make for the coast, but we cannot go back over the route by which we came."

Sadukh felt that the boy was right; another route must be chosen. He consulted with Terrzi Gobra, and they decided on the best course to pursue.

"Instead of going directly back to Diargat, we will make toward Chemstan," said Sadukh. "In Chemstan there are many Armenians, some of them being relatives of Terrzi Gobra. He thinks we may obtain fresh horses there."

"Then head for Chemstan without delay," directed Frank.

Sadukh and his sister rode two of the horses. Terrzi Gobra, who seemed tireless, was afoot. The boys took turns in riding the third horse.

Gobra acted as guide, and led the way to the road. This they left as soon as possible, taking to a faint path that ran through the forests and across the barren lands.

Before reaching this path, however, they had passed a traveler who regarded them with great curiosity, but saluted and passed on his way.

Sadukh was fearful that this man might cause them trouble by reporting that he had seen them.

To Frank the forests seemed gloomy and forbidding. Now that Sadukh had found his sister, Merriwell was eager to get out of the country, knowing full well that they were in great peril, and must be so until the coast of Turkey was left far behind.

Lucine's face was marked by a mingled look of sadness and joy. She was sad when she thought of her poor father in his cavern tomb, and she was joyous when she beheld at her side her brother whom she had scarcely expected to see again.

Brother and sister talked together. Lucine told how kind Father O'Hara had been, and how he had thrown Mousa Beg off the scent. The bloodthirsty young Kurd had been led to believe that Lucine and her father had escaped from the country.

Then she explained how the old priest had received a warning in a dream of the massacre that was to take place in Kalgore, and had conveyed Lucine and her

father to the house of Terrzi Gobra in the night. Gobra knew of the cave, and thither he took them.

When the Kurds demanded of Father O'Hara that he lead them to Lucine, he was able to truthfully assert that he knew not where she could be found.

Night came on, and they were making their way across an open country, headed toward some mountains, amid which was the village of Chemstan.

Then it was that, far behind them, they saw a party of horsemen.

"Pursuers, I think," said Frank, coolly.

The Armenians were greatly excited, but the two boys seemed wonderfully calm.

"We'll have to give them a rustle," observed Frank.

"Thot's roight, me b'y," nodded Barney. "There don't same to be so minny av thim. Oi think we can make it moighty warrum fer th' whilps!"

"Oh, we must not stop to fight them!" came in shaking tones from Sadukh's lips. "We must hurry onward as fast as possible."

"And let them follow us into Chemstan? Well, I guess not. Look here. I have been watching those fellows for some time, although I have said nothing about it. They are mounted on horses that can run us down, and they will overtake us shortly after we reach the mountains yonder. We will be forced to fight."

"Thot's roight," agreed Barney.

Sadukh was in a state of great agitation.

"Poor Lucine!" he said, huskily.

"If you want to save her, you must be ready to fight at any and all times. Now I have a scheme. You are to give your weapons to Gobra here, and then you will go on with your sister, while the three of us stop behind to get a crack at those fellows. There are not so many of them but what I think we'll be able to send them to the right about in a very brief space of time. Then we'll hurry to overtake you."

This plan was communicated to Gobra, who agreed to it, saying that he knew of a favorable spot to lay in wait for the pursuers if they could reach the mountains.

The pursuers came on swiftly, and they

hurried forward as fast as possible. When they entered a narrow pass that led into the mountains the enemy was so near that they could hear them yelling through the evening twilight.

There was no time to go far. Sadukh gave his pistols to Terrzi, and then he went on with his sister, while Frank, Barney, and the Armenian crouched behind some rocks.

The pursuers came galloping into the pass and bore down on the hidden trio. Terrzi knew he was not to fire till Frank Merriwell gave the signal by discharging the first shot.

Frank waited till the enemy was close at hand, and then he opened fire. Barney did likewise, and the Armenian began shooting as fast he could.

It was a great surprise for the enemy, of whom there were not more than ten or a dozen. Nothing of the kind had been expected, and the ambush utterly demoralized them.

Some were shot from their horses, some were wounded, and all were frightened, believing from the rapidity of the firing that they had been attacked by a large force.

Without delay, they whirled about and took to flight.

Then the triumphant trio hastened on after Sadukh and his sister.

CHAPTER X.

THE DOOM OF CHEMSTAN.

It was past midnight when Chemstan was reached.

Terrzi Gobra led the way to the house of a cousin, where the entire party was welcomed and fed.

In the morning, it was said, they would be provided with fresh horses and assisted on their journey, so they remained in Chemstan the rest of the night.

With the first hint of day, Frank was astir. Together with Gobra and his cousin, the boy went out to look for the required horses.

Frank had some money, and he engaged that the horses should be swift and strong, and he would pay for the extra animals and make good the difference between the ones that should be exchanged.

Gobra's cousin took them to see a

wealthy Armenian in the village. This man was aroused, and admitted them to the house after being assured that they were friends.

But barely had the bargaining begun when there were alarming sounds outside. First galloping horses were heard, then shots and shouts.

Then men ran to the windows and looked out.

"The Kurds!" screamed Terrzi, in Armenian. "They have taken the town!"

Barely had the words left his lips when there was a shot from the street, and he fell with a bullet through his body.

The other Armenians fell on their knees and prayed.

Frank leaped to Gobra's side, turned him over, and looked into his face. One glance was enough. The poor fellow was breathing his last.

For one moment Frank Merriwell was somewhat dazed. It had come about with such appalling suddenness.

Then the dead man's cousin, who could speak some English, said:

"It is our turn! They come to kill us all! But we have some few weapons. We have been to prepare for this."

"Then get your weapons and fight for your lives!" cried Frank. "You have no time to lose!"

He rushed out of the house. As he reached the steps, a bullet plowed along the side of his head, and he fell in a heap beside the steps.

What followed always seemed like a horrible dream to the boy. He lay there in the corner, benumbed, yet unable to move, yet with sense of sight and hearing. He saw Kurds galloping about and shooting down the men and women who came running from the houses in their night-clothes.

Children were not spared. He saw the Turks in the village join with the Kurds, pointing out the Christians who were to be killed. He saw aged men and women caught by the hair of the head and cut down. He saw dying persons writhing in their gore. He saw the murderous horde batter their way into houses and chase the inhabitants into the street, where the fiendish work of butchery was completed. The shrieks and prayers of the victims were drowned by the hoarse shouts of the

Kurds and Turks, who were continually crying:

"Padishahum chock yasa!" (Long live the Sultan).

He saw a gang of blood-stained wretches who forced eight crying, trembling children to stand in a line, that one bullet might be shot through them all. He saw half-naked and half-dead girls dragged through the dust by their inhuman captors. And there were horrors which he beheld that cannot be described.

Then he was left with the dead and dying all about him, while the butchers hurried away to a part of the town where fighting seemed to be taking place.

After some time, Frank's strength came back to him. He staunched the flow of blood from his wound with a handkerchief pressed upon it. Over this he drew his hat.

Then came a terrible thought that gave him new life and energy.

"Lucine—they are after Lucine! Have they found her yet?"

He hastened toward the place where the fighting was taking place, finding his revolvers were ready for use.

Suddenly he beheld a number of Kurds and Turks who were in hot pursuit of a girl who was running for her life. He saw her face, and recognized Lucine!

Like a deer Frank Merriwell bounded forward. The girl was running toward a little church, as if she hoped for refuge and safety there.

Not far from the door she stumbled and fell.

A moment later, and the American youth was between the quivering, helpless fugitive and the hounds on her track. His revolvers were turned on the pack, and he was ready for work as long as he could stand and shoot.

"Stand back!" cried Frank, commandingly. "Not one of you shall lay a hand on her!"

They halted in amazement, astounded by the daring of one boy.

At their head was Hassan Isnick, Sadukh's deadly foe.

He urged the others on, and they prepared to make a rush upon the boy.

Then came a cry that was music in Frank's ears.

"Hurro! Th' Unoitd Shtates and

Ould Oireland foriver! Give it to th' bloody spalpanes, Frankie! We are wid yez!"

Barney Mulloy, at the head of a large body of Armenians, the latter armed with old muskets, axes, clubs, and any sort of a weapon they could get hold of, came charging around the church.

"You're my mate!" cried the Irish boy.

He fired two shots, and Hassan Isnick fell forward on his face, writhing in the dust.

Then the Turks and Kurds began to shoot, and Frank Merriwell also commenced firing.

For a short time there was a fierce battle, but the Kurds were outnumbered, and they finally fled from the spot.

"Hurro!" cried Barney Mulloy, once more. "It's the divvil's own toime this is, to be sure; but we're shtill aloive, Frankie."

Then he caught up Lucine, who had fainted, and they retreated to a house which the Armenians had been able to hold against the assaults of the enemy.

Frank was sick at heart.

"Oh, that the world at large could have seen the things I have witnessed this morning!" he grated. "The Mohammedan butchers would not long hold sway in Armenia."

"Frankie," said Barney, "we must git out av this. Th' bloody Turruks have been beaten off fer a short toime; they'll not be satisfied. This place is done fer, me b'y."

Frank felt that this was true, but he wondered how they could get out of Chemstan. There seemed but little prospect that they would be successful in the attempt.

All the forenoon there was fighting in the place; but the Armenians, finding they were to be butchered like sheep, had arisen at last and were doing their utmost to defend themselves. They were desperate, and the butchers did not relish being killed in turn, so they withdrew for the time, waiting till their numbers should be swelled so they could sweep everything before them.

Then Frank and Barney spent the time in making arrangements to get out of Chemstan that night.

Sadukh seemed hopeless. He believed they were all doomed. Lucine, however, was hopeful, and she encouraged them as best she could. They found some horses for which they exchanged the ones they had ridden, and, when night came, they made the desperate venture.

* * * * *

Ever afterward it seemed to Frank Merriwell that their escape was nothing short of marvelous, but they succeeded in getting out of the doomed town and getting away.

When the Kurds and Turks again attacked the Armenians in Chemstan on the next day they expected to find Lucine Marderos and the fighting foreign lads still there. But the three were miles away, and Sadukh was with them.

The flight to the coast was fraught with terrible perils, but Sadukh found Armenians who were glad to shelter and befriend them, so that they finally succeeded in reaching Mersina.

From there Frank proceeded southward to Jerusalem, while his old companions turned their faces toward England. They were fortunate in getting out of Turkey.

At parting Sadukh embraced Frank over and over, declaring that he never could have reached his sister and brought her in safety to the coast if he had not been accompanied by the boys.

There were tears in Lucine's beautiful eyes as she gave Frank her hand.

"You are so brafе—so brafе!" she whispered. "You safe me from Hassan Isnick. I never forget."

"Be careful, you thafe av th' wurruld!" whispered Barney, in Frank's ear. "Don't yez be afther troying to stale her affictions."

"I will leave her to you, Barney," smiled Frank. "I think I may trust you to care for her."

"Oi'll do it wid me loife, b'y," was the earnest return.

When Frank joined Professor Scotch he was able to tell him somethings about the atrocities in Armenia, for he had been there and seen a few things with his own eyes.

And the professor—was he convinced?

If so, he would not acknowledge it. He declared that Frank had been dreaming.

[THE END.]

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